



## ***VAN BUREN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS***

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October 26, 2011

Honorable John J. Walsh  
Judiciary Committee Chair  
N-698 Anderson House Office Building  
124 N. Capitol  
Lansing MI 48933

Re: Opposition to HB 5093

Dear Chairman Walsh:

At the Van Buren County Board of Commissioner meeting yesterday, October 25, 2011, the Board took action to formally oppose House Bill 5093, recently referred to Judiciary Committee for consideration. Note that the Board is not protesting the reduction of one judgeship, but that this bill 1) delays implementation to some ill-defined time in the future while 2) ignoring the fact that the ultimate goal of a vacancy through attrition already exists and 3) actually reverses the cost savings and workload reallocation work that has already been accomplished.

As you are well aware, the State Court Administrative Office issued the Judicial Resources Report (JRR) that recommends one judgeship in Van Buren County be eliminated through attrition, and noted that there was currently a vacancy in the Circuit Court due to the retirement of Judge William Buhl on 1/1/11. This study was not undertaken lightly and for Van Buren County in particular included a secondary evaluation with personal interviews of the parties involved with the court function conducted by James Hughes, SCAO Region II Director. Although there has been disagreement locally regarding a reduction of judgeships, particularly from the Van Buren County Bar Association, the last ten months provides no evidence of any slowdown in the court docket. In fact, HB 5093 actually acknowledges the validity of the JRR, but does this inexplicably by reducing a District Court Judgeship in the future rather than taking advantage of the vacancy already in existence within Circuit Court.

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There is undoubtedly a reallocation of workload required. According to the JRR the workload of our judges ranges from 0.474 to 1.723. However, HB 5093 does not improve the situation as the eventual remaining District Court judge would end up with a workload of 1.727. Some reassignment has already been done and I am confident that with some finality to the question of whether or not Van Buren County will have five or four judges, our unified court will cooperatively be able to allocate the workload to an approximate even distribution of 1.066 per judge.

Van Buren County taxpayers are already experiencing the savings associated with a reduction in judgeships without any noticeable effect on due process. I have yet to hear a reasonable argument to justify reversing course as proposed in HB 5093.

Sincerely,



Christopher C. Randall, Chairman  
Van Buren County Board of Commissioners

Cc: Honorable Aric Nesbitt  
Honorable Tonya Schuitmaker  
Honorable John Proos